



1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to state the Terms of Reference for the distribution of surveys and other research projects to GSA Members, SET/GSET Trainees, SIMGs, and JDOC Members.

The Terms of Reference provide guidance to Members, SET/GSET Trainees, SIMGs and their research collaborators, regarding the process of gaining approval to distribute surveys and other projects for the purpose of gathering research data.

2. Definitions

Listed here are all key terms and acronyms used in the policy, and their definitions.

Acronym – Key Word	Definition
Board	GSA Board of Directors
GSA	General Surgeons Australia
Committee	Research & Scholarships Committee
SET	Surgical Education & Training
GSET	General Surgery Education & Training
SIMG	Specialist International Medical Graduate
JDOC	Junior Doctors

3. Policy

3.1 Survey Objectives

3.1.1 Quality Assurance

Surveys and other research projects promoted and distributed by GSA must be well designed, promote high quality patient care, and respect the privacy and confidentiality of participants.

The Committee will review applications by assessing scientific rigor of projects, providing advice to researchers, seeking evidence of ethics approval, and ensuring that Members, Trainees, and SIMGs are not overburdened with research requests.

The Committee will not approve a poorly constructed survey or project, with unclear objectives or which may not be of a publishable standard.

3.1.2 Types of Research

Surveys are used as a means to collect quantitative and qualitative data.

GSA encourages trainees to undertake survey research when needed to support the mandatory research requirement as part of their SET/GSET training.

Non-survey research may include recruitment of participants for qualitative interviews.

3.1.3 Ethics Approval

It is the responsibility of the researcher to gain ethics committee approval (university or hospital-based ethics committee) before the Committee approves the project for distribution.

Evidence of the ethics approval is required at the time of submission of the request for distribution.

3.2 Application Process

Researchers must provide the following documentation to the Committee's Coordinator for the request to be reviewed by the Committee:

- a. Research Approval Form
- b. Ethics approval letter
- c. Survey questions or link to online survey (if applicable)

3.3 Request Types & Approval Process

3.3.1 Internal Requests

Internal requests are initiated by GSA Members, SET/GSET Trainees, SIMGs, and JDOC Members, and may include requests to conduct survey based research, or non-survey research, such as qualitative interviews. Requests from JDOC Members must be supported by a GSA Member.

The Committee will review the content and methodology of each survey. The final approval to distribute a survey is the responsibility of this committee.

Promotion of the survey will include:

- a. Distribution of the survey via email.
- b. One (1) reminder email four (4) weeks after initial email, if required
- c. Promotion on the GSA website for two (2) months

3.3.2 External Requests

External requests are initiated by organisations other than GSA, non-members, and individuals outside of the General Surgery community (e.g. registrars and doctors in other specialties, government organisations and universities).

External surveyors are responsible for the distribution of their surveys.

GSA supports consultation and collaboration with external researchers.

However, the promotion of the survey will be limited to:

- a. Promotion on the GSA website for two (2) months

3.3.3 Review Process

All requests for research are coordinated through the Committee.

The review process may take up to twelve (12) weeks from the time of receiving a complete application and relevant documentation.

All applications will be considered for approval by the Committee, which will take place via email, as required, to expedite the approval process.

For an approval to be issued, at least 50% of all members eligible to vote must vote in favour of approving the request.

The approval takes effect on the date 50% or more of the total votes are received in favour of approving the request.

In the case of an equality of votes, the Chairperson has a second or casting vote.

The Committee may hold a meeting(s), if and when required, should further discussion of matters for approval be required.

The Committee holds an annual meeting at the beginning of every calendar year to review the Terms of Reference, discuss any relevant business, to plan the Committee's activities for the year ahead, and to discuss and consider any outstanding research requests.

3.4 Distribution

Approved projects may be distributed by GSA via email to GSA Members, SET/GSET Trainees, SIMGs, and/or JDOC Members either Australia wide or at state level depending on the research requirements.

GSA requires that the privacy of participants and their confidential information is respected. GSA will not provide contact information of GSA Members, SET/GSET Trainees, SIMGs, or JDOC Members directly to researchers.

The Committee will approve up to a maximum of **nine (9)** surveys per year to any group including GSA Members, SET/GSET Trainees, SIMGs, and/or JDOC Members.

The Committee will approve up to a maximum of **three (3)** non-survey research projects (such as qualitative interviews) per year to any group including GSA Members, SET/GSET Trainees, SIMGs, and/or JDOC Members.

This is to ensure that Members, Trainees, and SIMGs are not burdened by an excessive amount of research requests.

3.5 Survey Research Results and Publication

Collection and analysis of data and reporting of results is the responsibility of the researcher.

Researchers are required to report to GSA on any publications and research outputs arising from their survey or research project.

Researchers who publish or present at a scientific meeting, the results of a survey or research project that was facilitated by GSA, must acknowledge the assistance and cooperation of GSA.

4. Documents and Forms

- Research Project Approval Form

5. Implementation

The Board is responsible for authorising changes to the Terms of Reference following consultation with the Committee. The GSA Executive General Manager will be responsible for disseminating updates to Committee Support Staff and members.